

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE  
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2007**

The meeting was called to order by Council President Mark W. Blanchfield at 7:00 P.M. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. Blanchfield called upon Father James Brooks-McDonald, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, to deliver the Invocation.

Mr. Blanchfield then called upon Tony Buonome to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Deputy City Clerk called the roll and the following members of the City Council answered to being present:

Present – Councilmembers Joseph L. Allen, Frank J. Maurizio,  
Margaret C. King, Gary R. McCarthy, Denise K. Brucker,  
Barbara Blanchard and Mark W. Blanchfield

Absent - None.

Also Present – Mayor Brian U. Stratton, Deputy City Clerk  
Eileen M. Versaci and Corporation Counsel  
L. John Van Norden, Esq.

Mr. Blanchfield stated that at this time, Mr. Maurizio has a presentation:

Mr. Maurizio invited Sondra Stevens of Sondra's Fine Jewelry to join him behind the rail to receive a certificate congratulating Sondra on doing business on Upper Union Street for the past 10 years. Ms. Stevens stated that she is very happy to receive this recognition for her 10<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary, but, one of the reasons that I am here is that the Marines have chosen Sondra's Fine Jewelry as its drop-off center for "Toys for Tots". This will begin this Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup> at the store. Anyone who is bringing a new, unwrapped toy will be eligible for a diamond star pendent on the last day of collecting toys, December 18<sup>th</sup>. I hope to see you all up at the store with a new toy.

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

1. On Local Law Intro. #8-2007 to amend Chapter 192, Article II, Graffiti, of the City Code of the City of Schenectady.

Mr. Blanchfield invited all who wished to address the City Council on Public Hearing #1 to come forward (7:20 P.M.). The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

Romolo Versaci, 831 Wright Ave., said – I think that this legislation should be a misdemeanor. First of all, it discriminates against young people. There is

enough legislation against young people now. I believe that it is unfair to ask the store owners to lock up the paint can and to hire people to watch over them. I do advocate a law that they called malicious mischief in the old days against anyone caught destroying property. Thank you.

Al Jurczynski, 906 Londonderry Court, said – I want to start out by commending the Council and this administration for advancing this legislation. There is one thing that I would like to see – one part of this legislation to be corrected is that where the property owners needs to clean up any graffiti on their property. I am the owner of a brick building which recently was hit by some graffiti and to clean brick, you have to use, what is called a soda blaster and I cannot find anyone local with this machine and I would like to suggest that the city invest in a soda blaster and I would be more than happy to hire the city, if they had someone who is qualified to operate this machine. This would make the city more business friendly.

Seeing no other speakers, Mr. Blanchfield declared Public Hearing #1 closed at 7:40 P.M.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. McCarthy moved that the minutes of the City Council Meeting of September 24, 2007 be approved as submitted by the City Clerk. It was seconded by Mrs. Brucker. Hearing no objections, Mr. Blanchfield declared the minutes approved as submitted.

#### **COMMUNICATIONS:**

##### **Official –**

From the Mayor, a list of appointments.

From the Department of Engineering, one letter accepting the bid of and awarding the contract to Siewert Equipment Company for “Inline Sewage Grinders for the Waste Water Treatment Plant” in the amount of \$32,455.00.

##### **General –**

From Budd Mazurek, a letter stating that the Schenectady Civilian Police Review Board will meet on Wednesday, October 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 P.M. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Board Room at the downtown library on Clinton Street. The public is welcomed.

**PETITIONS:** None.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Mr. Maurizio stated that the City Development & Planning Committee met. There are several items on tonight's agenda – they are Agenda Items #2 and #3 which are connected and basically, they were the subject of a public hearing 2 weeks ago and it extends the Empire Zone into Rotterdam, for building a warehouse project and it should build more jobs for Schenectady. This will be subject to a Roll Call vote, it being a Local Law. Also, Agenda Items #6 and #8 are resolutions for the sale of property to BNI for the construction of new homes for Universal Design/Green Housing Prototype. The other Resolution that I would like to mention is Agenda Item #7 and that is to kick off the Lead Hazard Control and that includes health hazards and small job education. We are very excited about this and the education that this area will be receiving because of this HUD Grant.

Mr. Allen stated that the Health & Recreation Committee met. I was talking to Brian Dameon about the Golf Course; we had a very poor start in the Spring and in May, we were about \$40,000.00 down, but after that, things picked up and we had a very good Summer and I am looking forward to a long mild Fall.

Mr. McCarthy stated that the Public Safety Committee met. The Deputy City Clerk took away my big announcement tonight about the Police Review Board, but, I do want to compliment Budd Mazurek and the members of that Board for all the good work that they do and again, the meeting is on October 10<sup>th</sup> at the downtown Library on the second floor. I would like to comment on Public Safety on where we came from and where we are now. If you look over at this chart, back in 2003, there was the largest tax increase in the history of this city. Look at the package which was put together by the Mayor and his staff and we are still spending a huge amount of money in terms of public safety and we would like to spend more, but, you have to understand that we have to balance a budget and comes up with a budget that is fiscally prudent. That tax increase in 2003 had the effect of making this community less desirable to live in. It also makes the middle class members move out and the people that are less desirable and dramatically increasing our cost for police protection. We had a small decrease last year and this year, another small decrease. We would like to have more, but, we have to be fiscally prudent. We want to position ourselves for a decrease in

taxes and still deliver the services that makes this something that the residents will be proud of and have confidence in.

Mr. Blanchfield stated that the Finance Committee met. If you folks would just bare with me, I would like to comment on the budget review, up to this point. The first one that I would like to explain is the hiring of the lobbyist, contrary to the Gazette. I was well aware that the city did hire a lobbyist in 2007. The reasoning being is that all our local representatives at the State level voted to restore giving the police bargaining to arbitration over-riding the Court's ruling to have the Public Safety Commissioner or head of the Police Department to be in better control of police discipline. I also want to get into some issues of the Law Department; the Law Department has appropriately budgeted for judgments and claims this year. One of the things that got us into trouble in the past was not budgeting appropriately for judgments and claims that hit this city and not having control and making poor litigation decisions and where we could have paid pennies on the dollar – paying hundreds of thousands of dollars. So I commend the Law Department for its fiscal prudence in that regard. This Thursday in Room 110 at 7:30 A.M., we have scheduled the Public Safety part of the budget – that is the Police and Fire Departments.

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS):**

Mr. Blanchfield invited all who wished to address the City Council on any item of the Legislative Agenda to come forward. The following speaker rose to be heard and her remarks are summarized:

P.D. Voorhis, Schenectady resident, spoke on Agenda Item #1. I have read the landlord's legislation and you did not incorporate my suggestion that landlords could not conduct any other business on their rental property.

Seeing no other speakers, Mr. Blanchfield declared the Privilege of the Floor on the Legislative Agenda closed.

**INTRODUCTION OF AND ACTION UPON LOCAL LAWS, ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS:**

**Consent Agenda –**

Local Law #7-2007

**(Roll Call Vote – 7:0)**

Voting Aye – Allen,  
Maurizio, King, McCarthy,  
Brucker, Blanchard,  
Blanchfield

Resolution No. 2007-191

Adopted Unanimously

Local Law #9-2007

**(Roll Call Vote – 7:0)**

Voting Aye – Allen,  
Maurizio, King, McCarthy,  
Brucker, Blanchard,  
Blanchfield

Resolution No. 2007-192

Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2007-193

Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2007-194

Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2007-195

Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2007-196

Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2007-197

Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2007-198

Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2007-199

Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2007-200

Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2007-201

Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2007-202

Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2007-CS30

Adopted Unanimously

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:**

Mr. Blanchfield invited all who wished to address the City Council on any matter of city business to come forward. The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

Walter Chintomby, 1621 Chrisler Ave., made a complaint against the landlord next to his house. The roof has slates falling in my yard and they have hit my car. I called my insurance company; they will not pay and Code Enforcement will not do anything. I have many problems and I can't get help.

Mr. Blanchfield told Walter Chintomby to step out into the hall and discuss some of his concerns with Commissioner Wayne Bennett and Carl Olsen, Commissioner of General Services.

Romolo Versaci, 831 Wright Ave., said – I have no opinion on whether a lobbyist is necessary. It came as a surprise to me, maybe not the President of the Council. I do object to it being in the Corporation Counsel's budget; I would think that it would be in the Mayor's budget, but, the Corporation Counsel has done a wonderful job. I think that the City Council is not paid enough; they should get \$25,000.00 and the Mayor should be the highest paid in the city – the Mayor has oversight many departments and some 700 employees. The police has about 136 employees and the Police Chief's salary is about \$105,000.00 and the new Police Commissioner makes about \$119,000.00. It does not matter if you like the Mayor or not, he is the Executive Director of this municipal corporation and he is entitled to it. Lastly, I am in favor of a bill forbidding the use of transfats in restaurants and bakeries; it is detrimental to the health, particularly to the heart. New York City passed it and Albany passed it.

Al Jurczynski, 906 Londonderry Court, said – I was surprised to read about the lobbyist position. I wonder how that would have been received if I put that in my proposed budget any of the 8 years that I was here. Jerry Jennings, I have heard him say – time and time again – I am the city's lobbyist. The position of Mayor carries a credible influence whether it is State or Federal Government. Who can argue better for a city than the Mayor?

Vince Riggi, 2138 Campbell Ave., said – I respectfully disagree with my friend, Romolo about the pay raises. I am not hearing a clap of applause after I said that. I do not know if a lobbyist is necessary, but, I think that it was disingenuous of Jim Tedisco to have his Chief of Staff say that the city should have come to him to lobby the Governor when he voted against the Police legislation. I want to

thank Signal Control and the administration for taking care of the Stop Sign on Hegeman Street. What I want to bring up tonight is something that happened last year when I was campaigning and it is the reason that I will not support any candidate that has the Conservative Endorsement and this is the reason: Last year when I was campaigning in the Rosa Road area of the city, the Sheriff's candidate had the Conservative endorsement and it was pretty much backed by the PBA. I witnessed a Schenectady Police Car handling the campaign through the window to a person that was walking with me. That is despicable and I have spoke to the Commissioner and he says that it has been addressed at roll call. Everyone is entitled to their politics but not in the city's time.

Frederic Lee, 706 Stanley Street, said – I am President of the new Independent Hamilton Hill Neighborhood Association and I would like to make an announcement that we are having on Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, Candidates Night, at Petta's Restaurant, 134 Duane Ave. and this will be a combined meeting with the Schenectady NAACP.

Seeing no other speakers, Mr. Blanchfield declared the Privilege of the Floor on city business closed.

#### **MISCELLANEOUS:**

Mr. Maurizio said – First, I want to thank those who spoke on the proposed Graffiti Legislation; we will have it back in Committee this Monday, October 15<sup>th</sup> and assuming that the Committee passes it, I am pretty sure that it will, we will put graffiti to rest. One of the speakers mentioned that we were doing a disservice when we stopped the reading of the Agenda on Channel 16, that goes back a few years when the starting time of this meeting moved from 7:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. We did accommodate Channel 16 because they did not have the time for a Councilmember to go in and read the agenda. The Council members did exactly what the City Clerk does during the meeting. So by incorporating it into the meeting, I think we are reaching more people.

Ms. Blanchard said – I would like to invite everyone to our Green Energy Fair sponsored by the City and the Energy Advisory Board that this Council has established. This is being held on Saturday, October 20<sup>th</sup> between the hours of 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. here in City Hall.

Mr. Allen said – I would like to remind you that if you have not already voted, there is a school vote until 9:00 P.M. on a budget item. You still have time to get out and vote after the meeting. The other issue is that voter registration

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closes this Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup>. You have to get those in by 5:00 P.M. or mailed by October 12<sup>th</sup>. Another reminder – it's time, if you haven't already turned your furnace on, I would encourage everybody to get their furnaces checked.

The Mayor said – I want to make a couple of comments on the budget. I think that it was a very responsible spending plan. I want to address the Lobbyist issue; there is no Line Item in the 2007/2008 budgets for a Lobbyist. There is a “Fees for Services” which is a part of the Law Department's budget in which I think is \$218,000.00 in which we proposed to cover all the outside services that the Law Department uses and that number has gone down and we are spending less and less and using less outside services. When you look at the reasoning that we had to hire a Lobbyist in order to be able to discipline our Police Officers. Our Legislators voted against our position and our last hope was to lobby the Governor. It was vetoed by the Governor and we understand that it maybe reintroduced back to the Assembly and we will be – what we have to do to maintain the right to discipline the Police Department.

Mr. Blanchfield said - I am reminding everyone that, before this administration came into City Hall – in respect to State Aid, I remember when Mrs. Brucker, Mr. Maurizio and I went to Albany with a chart that we prepared showing how woefully we had to be treated compared to other cities our size. We have looked for help, wherever we could get it.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. Blanchfield declared the meeting adjourned at 8:20 P.M.

**A TRUE RECORD**

**BY EILEEN M. VERSACI  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK**